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UNCLAS HANOI 001699

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR DRL AND EAP/BCLTV

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PREL VM HUMANR

SUBJECT: EARLY RELEASE OF LE CHI QUANG

REF: A. Hanoi 1649 B. 02 Hanoi 2718 C. 02 Hanoi 2708

¶1. (SBU) A reliable activist source has confirmed the early release on June 12 of Le Chi Quang, who had been sentenced by the Hanoi People's Court on November 8, 2002 to a four year sentence (refs b and c) for alleged "acts of propaganda" against the State. According to Vietnamese media accounts, he had written a letter requesting clemency, had expressed remorse during his time in prison, and had promised not to break the law again. The Na Ham provincial people's court approved the early release.

¶2. (SBU) Our source, who spoke by telephone with Quang on June 14, reported that Quang said he was healthy. The superintendent of Nam Ha (Ba Sao) prison, where Quang had been held, confirmed to Pol/C on June 9 that Quang was in good health and claimed that reports of Quang's kidney ailments were not accurate (ref A). He did not indicate an imminent release, however.

¶3. (U) Embassy had formally requested that DRL Assistant Secretary Craner be allowed to meet with Quang, or other

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prisoners of concern at Nam Ha prison, during his June 18 visit, which has now been postponed. Pol/C reiterated this request directly to Vice Minister of Public Security Nguyen Van Huong on June 14. Huong did not indicate that Quang had already been released.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: The high likelihood is that this early release was intended as a "gift" to A/S Craner, a theory strongly believed also by our activist contact here.

PORTER